



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES,



The Fight for American Democracy:

Dispelling Popular Lies and Myths about the Federal Workforce

Position: Most Americans are unaware of the true size and nature of the Federal government. Many would be shocked to hear that the number of Federal employees has grown little since the late 1940's and currently stands at its smallest per capita in history. Unfortunately, some on Capitol Hill tell false tales about the Federal workforce on behalf of others for reasons of political gain or personal enrichment. They seek to cloud American democracy by disabling the foundational tools that keep the Executive Branch accountable and transparent, and free from corruption and political overreach.

The Federal workforce size is the same as it was in 1952 and is its smallest ever per capita.

The non-postal Federal civilian workforce is the same size now (approximately 2 million) as it was in 1952. Per capita, Federal employees represent the lowest number ever (.597%) from a record high in the late 1940s (1.85%). In contrast, the contractor workforce has expanded to more than 4 million workers. Nearly 40% of all discretionary tax dollars, more than \$700 billion annually, goes to private contractors and Taxpayer-funded corporate profits. Per the CBO, the Federal workforce—including benefits—costs less than one-third of the contractor workforce. Plus, Federal employees pay their taxes, so Federal employee wages go to the Treasury, not corporate coffers.

10,000 Federal employees are terminated for-cause each year.

A common falsehood often told by some on Capitol Hill is that Federal employees are “impossible” to fire. Each year, approximately 10,000 Federal employees are terminated for-cause (conduct or poor performance)ⁱ. This equates to approximately 40 involuntary terminations for cause per workday, or .5% of the workforce annually.

The Federal employee termination rate is HIGHER than the private sector.

The involuntary separations (terminations) rate in the private sector is 1% annuallyⁱⁱ. Of that 1%, about one-third are terminations for-cause and two-thirds are layoffsⁱⁱⁱ. This means that the termination rate for-cause in the private sector is .33%. The Federal government's termination rate for cause is higher at .5%. Detractors claim that Merit System Principles hinder the firing of Federal employees. They claim Federal unions do the same. Clearly, this is false. Merit System Principles buttress accountability throughout the government by deterring political overreach, corruption, poor management, and unfair practices without affecting employee termination rates.

The truth behind the MSPB and the FLRA, and the foolish effort to eliminate both.

Federal employees prevail only 18% of the time at the MSPB and only 3% of the time upon appeal to the full board. Management prevails 60% of the time against unions at the FLRA. Some in Congress argue these agencies favor employees. That claim is a lie, yet some in Congress block funding and qualified nominees to weaken these agencies and the Federal case law that protects the Executive Branch from political abuse and corruption (personal bias, favoritism, improper contracting, Schedule F “loyalty” employment, the Spoils system, etc.).

Why the war by some in Congress against Federal employee labor organizations?

Federal employees do not have to pay union dues, they cannot strike or bargain for pay or benefits, they put their duty before politics, they vote equally between Democratic and Independent and Republican; so why the hostilities toward Federal unions from some in Congress? The truth is that Federal unions are the eyes and ears across government. Federal union members are often the first to uncover unethical or illegal activities. For the politically or criminally corrupt, Federal unions are a threat to their unethical ways and criminal activity.

ⁱ [Fedscope.opm.gov](https://www.fedscope.opm.gov); Termination or Removal for Discipline or Performance, FY 2005 to FY 2023.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, May 31). *Table 5. layoffs and discharges levels and rates by industry and region, seasonally adjusted - 2023 M04 results*. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.t05.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ Trevor, C., & Piyanontalee, R. (n.d.). *Discharges, poor-performer quits, and layoffs as valued exits: Is it ...* Annual Reviews. <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012119-045343>